

Performance excellence in government.
An oxymoron?
At the City of Bellevue, we don't think so.



Searching for a better mousetrap



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What makes Bellevue a first-class community? One reason has been our willingness to explore new ways of doing things, to continually look for innovative ways to maintain and improve high-quality city services. Call it a constant search for a better mousetrap.

This mindset has been particularly evident in recent years as the Council has successfully worked with staff to:

- Develop new technology and business practices to revolutionize the way we deliver services, both online and in-person. We've cut the red tape, making it faster and easier to do most everything.
- Create new types of partnerships to increase citizens' involvement in their neighborhoods, expand housing options for low- and moderate-income families, develop new municipal water supplies and provide support for children at the elementary-school level;
- Pioneer new types of citizen surveys and other performance measurement tools to promote government accountability and provide citizens with more opportunities to express their views.

All these initiatives have contributed in some way to making Bellevue one of the premier cities in the nation. From our superb residential neighborhoods and bustling downtown, to our award-winning parks and excellent public safety services, innovation has played a key role in shaping Bellevue.

In coming years, Bellevue and the Eastside region will continue to face major challenges due to population growth and other forces. How successful we are responding to these challenges will be determined by our willingness to be creative, to think outside the box, to put aside established ways of doing things when they don't work and embrace new, innovative ones.

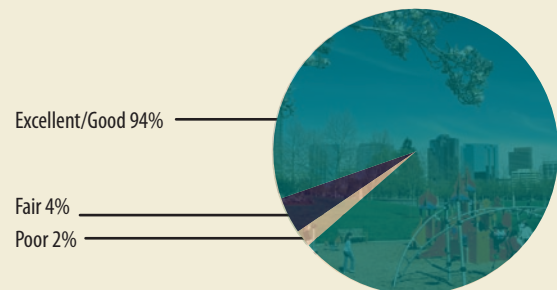
If our recent track record is any indicator, Bellevue is ready to meet those challenges.

"Vital Signs:" Measuring a City's Performance

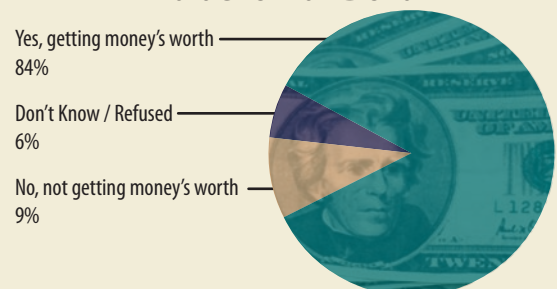
In Bellevue, city leaders pioneered the development of municipal "vital signs." These signs measure such things as police and fire response times, municipal water quality and the stability of the city's finances. Residents are surveyed about whether they believe the city is headed in the right direction and they are getting value for their tax dollar.

The vital signs, 16 in all measured annually through polling and data collection, are an integral part of the city's larger Performance Measurement Program. The program has been recognized nationally for its innovation by public policy experts, and has been the recipient of the Award of Distinction from the International City and County Management Association.

Bellevue as a Place to Live



Value for Tax Dollar



Making performance excellence a reality



Is the phrase “performance excellence in government” an oxymoron? At the City of Bellevue, we don’t think so. And we’re proving it.

This year, Bellevue, because of its innovative accomplishments, was chosen to host the prestigious Innovations Group (IG) national conference. The nonprofit group is

comprised of top government leaders from across the nation and is committed to developing new ideas and cutting-edge approaches to public service.

This brochure outlines some of Bellevue’s new ideas and approaches. Some have come about by our desire to exploit new technologies, such as the Internet, to deliver city services more conveniently and quickly to residents and businesses. Others have come about by a desire to forge creative partnerships, both within the city and regionally, to meet complex challenges ranging from building affordable housing for the needy to prioritizing public investments in neighborhoods.

The brochure also outlines how the city has pioneered new performance measurement survey tools that promote government accountability, public outreach and employee excellence.

What it all adds up to is a consistent drive to be the best by embracing innovation.

After all, performance excellence should not be the exception to the rule in government.

It should rule.

Steve Sarkozy,
City Manager

May 2007



Enhancing first-class neighborhoods



Extensive public involvement is key to effective municipal government. But how can cities invite participation by the public to shape the quality of life in the neighborhoods in which they live?

At Bellevue, a variety of innovative programs help

residents organize and give them a voice in funding decisions regarding ongoing neighborhood infrastructure needs. These programs include:

- The **Neighborhood Enhancement Program** provides funding for projects selected by residents themselves;
- The **Neighborhood Investment Strategy** focuses resources on the special needs of older neighborhoods. The program won the 2003 James C. Howland Gold Award for Urban Enrichment sponsored by the National League of Cities and CH2M Hill;

- The **Neighborhood Liaison Program** assigns city staff to specific neighborhoods and gives them the task of connecting residents to city resources and addressing concerns.

The city also operates a Mini-City Hall at Crossroads as a service center for Bellevue's most diverse and densely-populated neighborhood; a mediation program that works with residents to solve local conflicts in a peaceful, non-litigious atmosphere; and a traffic calming program to resolve problems associated with speeding and cut-through traffic.

Most recently, the City Council approved a Neighborhood Livability Action Agenda to address new and emerging neighborhood needs. The two-year agenda is currently focused on maintaining the appearance of older neighborhoods and preserving the unique character of neighborhoods undergoing redevelopment.



eCityGov Alliance: customer-friendly web portals

Bellevue played the key role in the incubation and development of the eCityGov Alliance, a nationally-honored partnership comprised of nine cities in the Puget Sound region. The five-year-old Alliance provides cross-boundary web services to more than 20 cities, a county and several other government agencies.

The eCityGov Alliance uses the latest technology to offer convenient access to parks, maps, commercial property and simple permits in multiple cities. The Alliance's shared service model also significantly lowers the cost of new, high-value services to member cities and agencies.

Alliance services include:

- **MyBuildingPermit.com:**

This was the first online permit portal in the nation that enabled users to obtain multiple permits from multiple cities and one county in a single transaction. The site also offers online permit status, inspection scheduling, construction tip sheets, training information and a host of construction-related resources.

- **NWMaps.net:**

This map-based web portal provides a rich set of publicly accessible Geographic Information System (GIS) data,

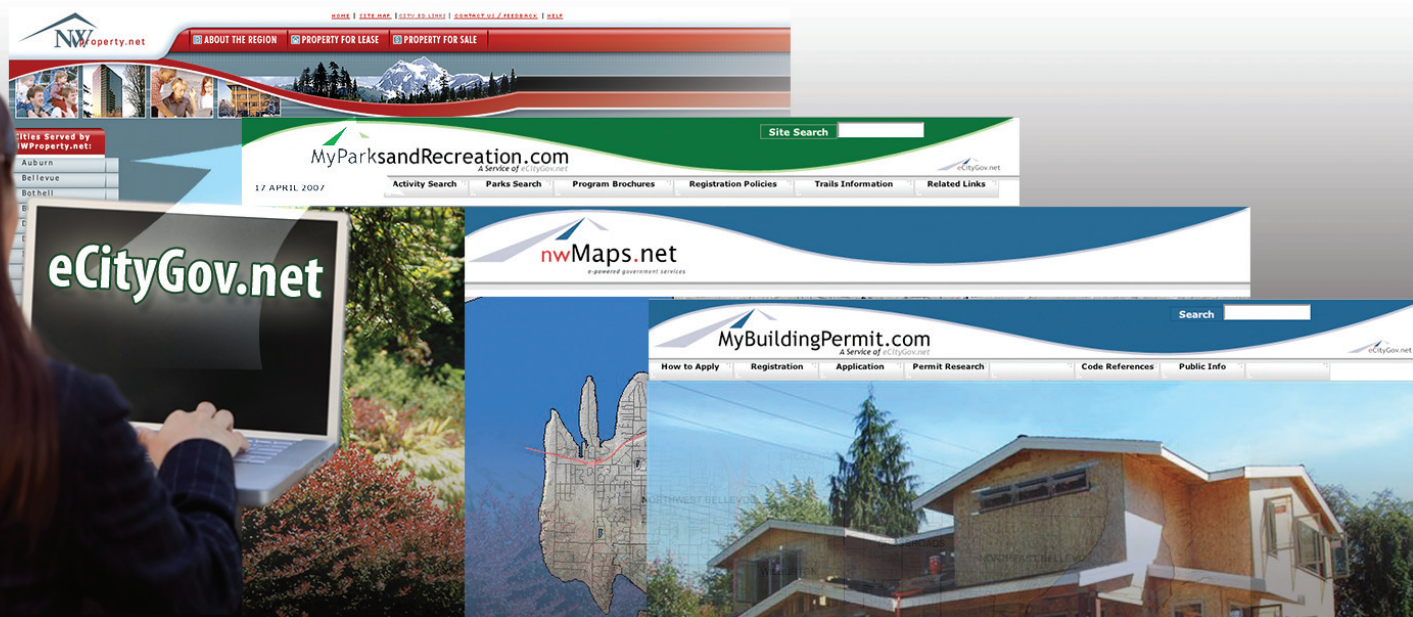
such as overhead photos, parcel boundaries, land use, parks, trails, streets and other information. The site also integrates other data such as demographics, zoning and tax parcel information.

- **MyParksandRecreation.com:**

With one stop at MyParksandRecreation.com, users can locate parks, recreation facilities and recreation activities across participating cities. Busy parents can quickly find the most convenient activities for their children, whether they are close to work, home or somewhere in between. Using a unique, multi-faceted search engine, visitors can also access details about more than 300 parks, including maps, recreation amenities, driving directions and contact information.

- **NWProperty.net:**

This regional map-based economic development portal locates commercial property available for sale or lease. Customers include international and national site selectors, local businesses and commercial realtors. The site compiles existing, live data from the local Commercial Brokers Association with city Geographic Information System (GIS) data, county assessor data and business demographic data.



Bellevue's iconic new City Hall: "A community treasure"



It's not often a building is called a "community treasure." But that is exactly what Bellevue's new City Hall, which opened in 2006, has been labeled by the Bellevue Downtown Association.

The impetus for a new City Hall emerged when the city was confronted with the need to invest up to \$90 million to upgrade public safety facilities and technology. Seeking a way to leverage the huge investment to meet other pressing needs as well, city leaders initiated a dialogue with residents.

The answer came in the form of a vacant office building in the heart of downtown – the former Qwest Building. Seizing a rare opportunity created by a downturn in the real estate market, the city purchased the building at a bargain-basement price.

After extensive renovations, the 350,000-square foot building was transformed into an innovative civic center noted for its aesthetics and functionality. The building structure is expected to meet the city's public safety needs for decades to come, in part through a state-of-the-art seventh-floor 911 Emergency



Hundreds of residents gather in the new City Hall concourse to celebrate the grand opening in May of 2006.

Communications Center that serves multiple jurisdictions throughout the Eastside.

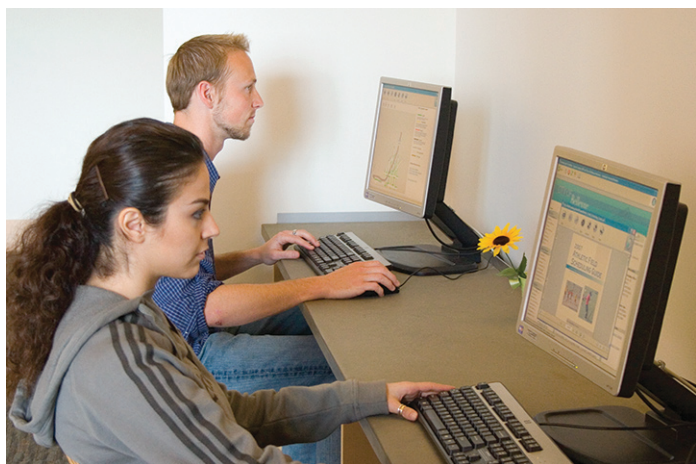
But the new City Hall also:

- Consolidates city services that had been scattered in seven buildings throughout the city in one location;
- Provides the community with an “essential building” (retrofitted to remain operational during a major earthquake or other disaster);
- Houses the city’s Traffic Management Center where engineers use real-time traffic map displays and cameras to help keep traffic flowing throughout Bellevue;
- Makes it far easier for residents, contractors and other city customers to receive numerous services by making it possible for them to get what they need in one place with one person on the first floor;



The Eastside emergency dispatch center

- Realizes a 20-year city goal contained in the Comprehensive Plan and reaffirmed annually by City Council to move City Hall downtown in order to nurture a strong civic presence and enhance service to the rapidly expanding residential and business communities there;
- Provides the community with 11,000 square feet of public meeting space available for meetings, concerts and other events, as well as a new outdoor public plaza.



The new City Hall provides computer access to visitors.

After extensive renovations, the 350,000-square foot building was transformed into an innovative civic center noted for its aesthetics and functionality.



City Hall plaza

Although open only a short while, the new City Hall has quickly become a magnet for the entire community. What had once been a utilitarian fortress built to house telecommunications equipment, is now a vital and attractive public building.

Provocative art that tells a civic tale



Photo by Spike Mafford

Each of the major pieces of public art at Bellevue's new City Hall represents a serious, unique work by a noted Pacific Northwest artist. Together, however, the artworks reflect much more—they tell a larger story of civic values and the democratic principles under which Bellevue's government affairs are conducted.

"The Root," a massive bronze casting of a cedar root painted silver, stands outside, in the new City Hall plaza. Tilted and half-leaning as if it were alive, with a sprawl of roots, artist Dan Corson's creation reflects a central idea in the City Hall design: making the work of the city transparent and accessible to everyone.

Inside, artist Linda Beaumont's terrazzo floor runs the length of the public concourse, echoing the smooth and steady movement of a river current – a metaphor for the flow of ideas, dialogue and other activities within the building.

Outside, dominating the east side of City Hall, stands artist Alan Storey's 63-foot tall compass needle. Designed to spin, with a viewfinder on the balcony that turns when the doors to City Hall open, "Compass" serves as a metaphor of how a community's future is shaped by citizens who participate in the affairs of government.



A Regional Coalition for Housing (ARCH): Leveraging resources for affordable housing

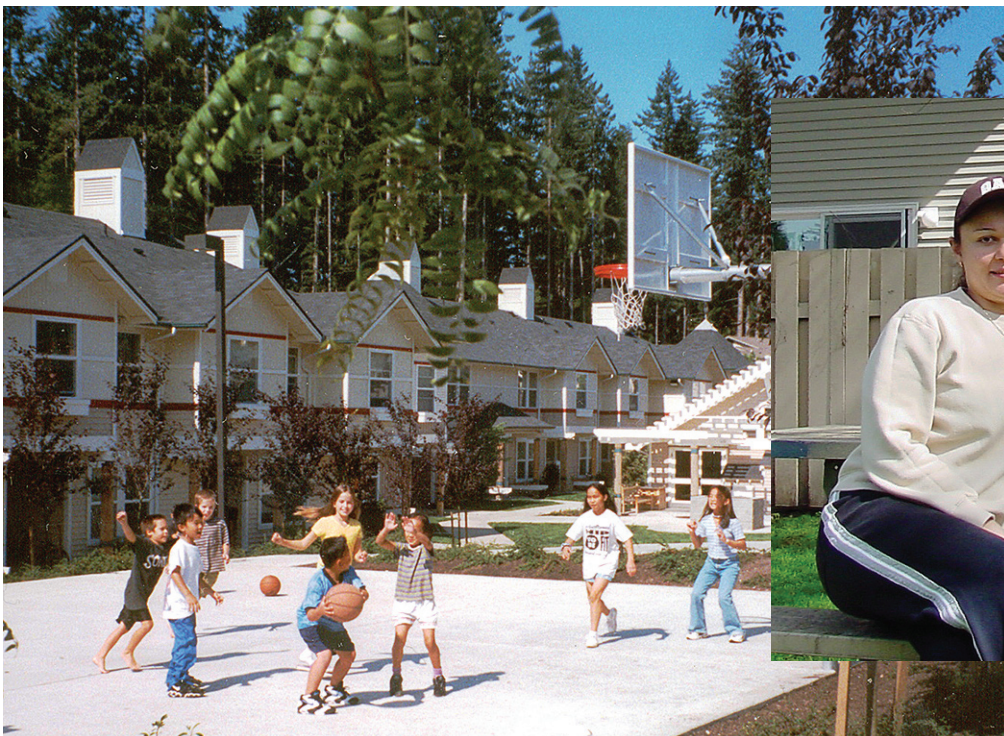
Winner of the inaugural Innovations in American Government Award for Affordable Housing (presented by Harvard University and the Fannie Mae Foundation), A Regional Coalition for Housing (ARCH) is a unique regional partnership of Bellevue, 14 other cities and King County, joined together to preserve and increase the supply of housing for low- and moderate-income households. ARCH coordi-

nates public resources to fund affordable housing developed by not-for-profit and private organizations.

Since its founding in 1992 by the City of Bellevue and other local government partners, the members of ARCH have provided more than \$22 million for the creation of about 2,250 units of affordable housing. The latest projects under way include six units of housing for homeless families in Bellevue (a project sponsored by the nonprofit Housing at the Crossroads), and the preservation of 28 units of federally-subsidized low-income housing at Mine Hill in Issaquah.

Another activity at ARCH has been assisting members with creating affordable housing and overseeing their ongoing administration through local land-use incentive programs. These programs have created hundreds of additional housing units for moderate-income families throughout East King County.

ARCH is an active participant in the Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness in King County.



Service First: Simplifying access to public services



When Bellevue's new City Hall opened in the winter of 2006, an innovative customer service model, combining high-tech capability with an old-fashioned concierge style, made its debut.

Called Service First, this one-stop approach to customer service gives residents and visitors streamlined access to various services, allowing people to conduct their business in a single location and, typically, with a single person. Customers no longer need to navigate through the building to get what they need.

With its prominent location on City Hall's first floor, Service First sets the tone for the visitor's experience. In fact, 98 percent of the respondents to a recent city survey said Service First had a positive impact on their experience with the city.

Service First:

- Eliminates multiple stops for customers seeking to pay bills, obtain licenses and permits, sign up for parks and recreation classes, get parking validated, reserve meeting rooms, purchase maps, codes and documents and obtain general information;
- Provides trained service coordinators who can take care of the majority of customers' needs;
- Provides language interpretation services for non-English speaking customers; and
- Provides computers for those who prefer self-service.

In a given month, Service First staff average:

- 5,767 walk-in customers;
- \$5.6 million in transactions;
- 5,876 phone calls;
- 321 meetings scheduled; and
- 243 e-mail inquiries

Wall Street's Endorsement: Triple-A Bond Rating

Sound fiscal stewardship is the backbone of any first-rate community. But how does a city know if it is achieving this stewardship?

Wall Street offers Bellevue a major endorsement. The two nationally-recognized bond rating agencies – Standard & Poor's and Moody's – both have bestowed their highest, "triple-A" ratings on Bellevue's general obligation bonds.

Both agencies commend the city's financial methods and performance, as well as the community's strong and diversified economy. An analyst with Standard & Poor's characterized the city's financial status as "strong and well-managed."

Streamlining the construction process



When the City of Bellevue launched an initiative in 2001 to make the permit process more predictable and customer-friendly, it didn't settle for improvements just in individual departments or specific business practices. The city took reform to a new level, recreating the entire permitting and inspections functions as a single line of business. The new Development Services spans the entire organization, operating on a common set of management principals.

The result has been a new culture focused on high-quality customer service. Regulators became facilitators and problem solvers, and the results have been dramatic.

Under Development Services:

- More than 50 percent of the city's quick-issue permits are now issued through the Internet, saving customers time and money and taking vehicles off the road;
- Customer satisfaction ratings have dramatically increased, with more than 80 percent saying the city is doing a good to excellent job conducting inspections and reviewing permit applications;
- The status of permits and inspections is now provided online; and
- One person, a project manager, is assigned as a single point of contact for major project review.



*David Johnanson Vasquez/
Big Picture*



*David Johnanson Vasquez/
Big Picture*

Downtown Wireless Zone: Taking wireless to the streets



What's it take to gauge the effectiveness of wireless technology in a challenging urban landscape?

To find out, the city in 2007 joined with Cisco Systems to launch the BellevueCONNECT "Hot Zone" project and bring open-air wireless Internet to Bellevue's central business district.

The BellevueCONNECT Hot Zone covers the city's pedestrian corridor (including the Downtown Park) between 112th Avenue Northeast on the east, 100th Avenue Northeast on the west, Northeast Fourth Street on the south and Northeast Eighth Street on the north.

Covering 150 acres in the downtown core, the Hot Zone pilot project's purpose is to:

- Provide seamless, high-speed, wireless Internet access;
- Enhance public safety and increase operational efficiency and public service delivery;
- Provide wireless access to residents, businesses and visitors; and
- Serve as an economic development tool.

Accreditation

How does a city know if it is achieving operational excellence? How does it know if it is providing its workforce with the best possible tools and training to serve the community in the best possible way?

To answer these and other questions, the City of Bellevue launched an initiative to seek national accreditation for all of its major operating departments. The results have been impressive:

- In October of 2005, the city's Parks and Community Services Department became only the second parks agency in the state to successfully complete the rigorous process of national accreditation. The same year, the department received the National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Parks and Recreation Management;
- In 2005, the Police Department was accredited along with the Emergency Communications Center;

- In 2004, the Utilities Department became accredited, becoming the first in Washington state and the 14th in the United States and Canada.
- The city's Fire Department was accredited in 1998, and re-accredited in 2003.

In addition to these accreditations, the Finance Department has won the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for 24 consecutive years.



Want more information? Contact City of Bellevue Communications • Communication@bellevuewa.gov • 425-902-4090